



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BRAC USA announces renewed push for Bangladesh garment workers

\$5 million raised for newly launched Bangladesh Humanitarian Fund for rehabilitation of garment workers, victim support, and awareness of workplace safety

NEW YORK, NY – As the one-year anniversary of the Bangladesh Rana Plaza building collapse approaches, BRAC USA, the North American affiliate of BRAC, announced today a multi-year fundraising initiative to ensure that progress continues on humanitarian aid and support for workers in Bangladesh’s ready-made garment industry. An antipoverty organization founded in 1972, BRAC (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) is a global leader in providing opportunity for the world’s poor.

BRAC USA’s new Bangladesh Humanitarian Fund will be directed to three specific program areas: support for the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund; continued support for BRAC’s work to provide counseling and rehabilitation to garment workers; and a reserve that can be used to support a “social safety net” for workers impacted by other tragedies such as the Tazreen factory fire in 2012.

“Bangladesh has seen significant gains in living standards, halving poverty rates in the last 20 years, thanks largely to women’s empowerment. The garment industry has played a tremendous role in this,” says Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, Founder and Chairperson of BRAC. “But these gains will mean little if we allow tragedies like Rana Plaza to continue. The words ‘Made in Bangladesh’ should be a mark of pride, not shame.”

In the wake of the collapse of Rana Plaza on April 24, 2013, which killed more than 1,100 people, BRAC has provided relief and medical assistance, psychosocial counseling for victims, and livelihood support and training with support from BRAC USA, the International Labor Organization and others. Working with other stakeholders, BRAC has also advocated for a long-term solution to Bangladesh worker safety issues.

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The Bangladesh Humanitarian Fund continues that work with its first major grant this week: a \$2.2 million donation to the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund, which supports victims of the Rana Plaza disaster and their families, who are receiving payments coordinated under a single approach through the Rana Plaza Arrangement. With the International Labor Organization serving as neutral chair, the Rana Plaza Arrangement is overseen by a Coordination Committee established in November 2013 by a multi-stakeholder coalition of government, employers, workers, retailers and civil society. BRAC USA's Bangladesh Humanitarian Fund seeks to address victim needs and garment worker safety concerns in part by contributing a portion of every gift to the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund.

BRAC USA's Bangladesh Humanitarian Fund has already raised more than \$5 million, including support from Walmart, Asda, Walmart Foundation, The Children's Place and The Gap Foundation.

"These global industry leaders and foundations contributed to BRAC USA's fund based on BRAC's deep history and community roots in Bangladesh, and on BRAC USA's strong commitment to a long-term solution and its high standards in grantmaking, monitoring and reporting," said Susan Davis, President and CEO of BRAC USA.

"The Rana Plaza tragedy was a wake-up call for the world that shocked our collective conscience," Davis adds. "Even eleven months after Rana Plaza, more support needs to be provided to victims and their families. Delays have taken place for a variety of reasons, but rather than looking back, we're moving forward on common ground, and with a clear message: A better path is possible, and we can help create it."

Mr. Gilbert Hougbo, the ILO Deputy Director-General for Partnerships and Field Operations, said, "The Coordination Committee has called for donations from any party, and they are very much needed to ensure fair treatment for the Rana Plaza victims who are struggling to rebuild their lives and those of their dependents and families. This coordinated Arrangement is a key step on the road to establishing decent work and safe workplaces in the Bangladesh garment industry. We welcome BRAC USA's efforts in support of the Arrangement and hope that its pro-active approach inspires others to donate funds too."

The Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund is open to donors from around the world on a voluntary basis, including those that were not in Rana Plaza, as an expression of solidarity and compassion.

BRAC USA will also use contributions to its Bangladesh Humanitarian Fund to make grants in support of BRAC's continuing work to build sustainable futures beyond

monetary compensation for affected garment workers. This support includes counseling and training in new livelihoods for those who survived Rana Plaza, Tazreen and similar disasters but cannot, or do not wish to, return to the ready-made garment industry.

BRAC is the world's largest nonprofit antipoverty organization and often among the top ranked in terms of effectiveness. A sister organization, BRAC International, now works in 10 other countries in Asia and Africa, supported by two independent affiliates headquartered in New York and London.

Since the Rana Plaza disaster, it has been working with other stakeholders in the public, private and civil society sectors for long-term solutions to Bangladesh worker safety issues. In April, BRAC University, a full-fledged institution of higher learning set up by BRAC in 2011, will host a conference on workers' rights and safety issues in Dhaka.

BRAC USA welcomes additional contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations. All gifts to the new Humanitarian Fund will be administered by BRAC USA, an independent 501(c) 3 charitable organization registered in New York State, with fiduciary responsibility resting with its board of directors.

ABOUT BRAC

BRAC, a development organization founded in Bangladesh in 1972, is a global leader in creating opportunities at scale as a means to end poverty. With more than 100,000 employees, it is the world's largest non-governmental organization, touching the lives of an estimated 135 million people in 11 countries using a wide array of antipoverty tools such as microfinance, education, healthcare, legal rights training and more.

Learn more at BRAC.net.

ABOUT BRAC USA

BRAC USA is an independent, US-based grantmaking affiliate of BRAC formed in 2006 to advance and support BRAC's global mission to create opportunities to unleash human potential and end poverty.

Learn more at www.bracusa.org.

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